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SNIE 11-13-67

20 July 1967

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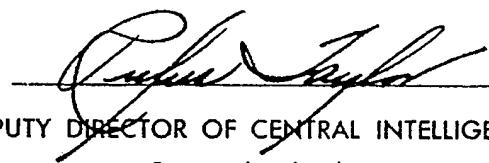
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

NUMBER 11-13-67

Probable Soviet Objectives in Rearming Arab States

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL

Submitted by



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20 JULY 1967

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Date 1/24/94

HRP 94-3

PROBABLE SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN REARMING ARAB STATES

CONCLUSIONS

A. Despite Moscow's dismay at the Arab debacle, its objective is still to expand its influence in the Middle East and, with the aid of the radical Arab regimes, to undermine that of the US. But this involves the Soviet leaders in a dilemma: to gain favor with the Arab leaders by providing arms, and yet to avoid fomenting another Arab-Israeli war.

B. The Soviets have already replaced much of the fighter aircraft inventory and some of the other materiel lost in the war, and we believe that they have, at least in general terms, given the Arabs assurance that the losses will be restored. But we think that Moscow will defer final decision concerning the ultimate level of resupply. It will wish to confine its material and political support of the Arabs to a scope and nature that will avoid severe risk of provocative Arab action or of Israeli preemption.

C. To demonstrate Soviet support of the Arabs against Israel and the US, Moscow has already expanded its presence in the area. There is likely to be a further influx of Soviet advisers, instructors, and technicians. And, though the USSR will continue to be wary of formal base agreements and will almost certainly avoid signing any defense pacts, there is likely to be an increased Soviet military presence in Arab ports and military facilities.

D. The Soviets will probably try to exercise more influence over the political leaders and the military establishments of the radical Arab states. We do not believe that the latter wish to join the Communist camp, but they may accept a closer relationship with the USSR.

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DISCUSSION

I. RESUPPLY OF ARMAMENTS

1. Over the dozen years prior to the outbreak of hostilities on 5 June 1967, the USSR supplied military equipment to a value of about \$2 billion to the UAR, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria. This consisted of a wide variety of ground, sea, and air armaments, including such up-to-date equipment as the SU-7 fighter bomber, the T-55 tank, and the Komar missile patrol boat. The USSR has also provided extensive training and technical assistance. About 7,000 Arab military personnel have been trained in the Soviet Union, and in the last two years an average of some 900 Soviet military advisers were present in Egypt, 600 in Algeria, 165 in Syria, and 120 in Iraq. Most of these advisers were located at training centers, although there were Soviet technicians at Egyptian SAM sites and Soviet officers stationed with the units in southwest Syria.

2. The war severely damaged the Arab armed forces. The UAR lost about two-thirds of its fighter aircraft, 80 percent of its bombers, and half its tanks. The Sinai fighting eliminated from the Egyptian order-of-battle 2 infantry divisions, 1 armored division, and 15 of its 23 independent brigades. Personnel losses were heavy. While casualties among Egyptian pilots were probably light, as most aircraft were destroyed on the ground, losses among armored vehicle crews almost certainly were high. There was also considerable damage to radar installations and SAM sites. Probably at least as significant was the damage to morale and to leadership. The UAR military is unlikely to have much stomach to fight the Israelis soon. The military command and control structure was apparently shattered, at least temporarily, and the top command has been changed.

3. The Syrian armed forces also suffered heavily. They lost most of their fighters and a quarter of their tanks. The Syrian top command was badly factionalized prior to hostilities and is now probably in worse shape, reducing its ability to engage in military actions.

4. The Iraqis and the Algerians played little part in the actual hostilities. The Iraqi air force lost 10-15 fighters and 2 or 3 bombers, some in combat over Israel, others on the ground. The Iraqi infantry was only slightly engaged and suffered few losses. The hostilities had little effect on the command and control structure of the Iraqi army. The Algerians played no direct role in the fighting, confining their activity largely to transferring Soviet equipment from their inventory to the UAR. Their armed forces were thus almost entirely unaffected by the war and they continue to urge a resumption of the conflict.

5. In the period just before the war, Moscow was apparently willing to meet Arab requests for military equipment; late in May, the USSR agreed to dispatch some 200 tanks and a number of vehicles to the UAR. During the war, the Soviets made a small number of flights which we believe to have carried military

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supplies to Egypt and Algeria. After the ceasefire came into effect, large-scale shipments by air and sea began. The Soviets have also sent a small quantity of materiel to Syria and Iraq.

6. The emergency airlift lasted about three weeks. During this period, we believe that at least 60 percent and perhaps as much as 90 percent of the Egyptian fighter losses were replaced, although we do not know how many of the new aircraft were of the more advanced types. No bombers were provided directly by the USSR, though Algeria sent about 10 IL-28s to Egypt. The tanks which have been delivered since the war—probably about half the number destroyed—were part of a shipment agreed on before the fighting began. Military shipments by sea to the UAR are continuing at a pace somewhat higher than before the war. We believe that the USSR has replaced only about one-fifth of the fighter aircraft lost by Syria. Both the Algerians and the Iraqis have also received some fighter aircraft from the Soviet Union, possibly enough to bring them back to prewar strength.

7. To return the military equipment of Syria and the UAR to about their prewar levels would require a sealift of at least 80 additional voyages by the vessels available in the Soviet Black Sea merchant fleet. With considerable disruption of existing trade patterns, a sealift of this magnitude could be accomplished in as short a time as three months. If, as we believe likely, resupply continues at about the present pace, it might take about a year. It would in any case take at least that long to reform the shattered Egyptian units and train them in the use of this equipment. The Syrian units could probably be brought back to their prewar status somewhat earlier.

II. GENERAL SOVIET POLICIES TOWARD THE ARABS

8. The Soviet leaders seem to have been surprised and dismayed by the outbreak of the war and shocked by the speed and extent of the Arab defeat. Nonetheless, they are seeking to exploit the situation to further their continuing objectives in the Middle East: i.e., to expand the USSR's influence and, with the aid of nationalistic and revolutionary Arab regimes, to reduce or eliminate the Western position in the area. But Soviet policy in the Middle East involves a dilemma. On the one hand, the most effective means of keeping Arab nationalist leaders on the Soviet side is to furnish them arms. On the other hand, this risks encouraging the Arabs to make war on Israel, a course running counter to Soviet policy in the Middle East and one which could, in addition, involve a Soviet-US confrontation. The USSR certainly hopes to be able to find some middle way, to give the Arab countries enough material and political support to expand the Soviet presence but not enough to provoke a renewal of major hostilities. In any case, Moscow knows that for its own purposes it must maintain its ties with the Arabs; the radical Arabs, with nowhere else to turn, are aware that they too must sustain the relationship. Arab nationalism, directed against Israel, and Soviet caution, born of the USSR's position as a world power, place limits on the relationship, but within those limits the two sides clearly have much to gain from each other.

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9. While the Arab-Israeli fighting was still in progress, the Soviet leadership appeared to be most concerned about avoiding direct Soviet involvement and a possible confrontation with the US. To these ends, it communicated directly with the US in an effort to get the fighting stopped and, at the UN, voted for a simple ceasefire, rather than holding out in hopes of gaining terms more acceptable to the Arabs. Since the end of the fighting, however, the Soviets have moved rapidly to rebuild their prestige with the Arabs and to place most of the blame for the Arab setback on US encouragement of Israel. Moscow has also sought to convince the Arabs and the world at large that the USSR's ability and determination to maintain its strong presence in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean basin have not been undermined by the outcome of the recent war.

10. Yet the Soviets probably appreciate that the situation in the Middle East has changed. They probably recognize that their prestige in the area has been impaired, though far less than that of the US, and they have good reason to reexamine their beliefs and their expectations vis-a-vis the Arab world. They are plainly unhappy about the performance of the Arab armies, more conscious than before of the risks of association with headstrong and imprudent client states, and almost certainly more aware of the limits of the influence their aid programs have given them.

11. The Soviet leaders are probably now in the process of reviewing overall policy toward the Middle East. But we do not believe that any of them advocate withdrawal from the area. A number of interim decisions (e.g., the level of immediate resupply of the badly-damaged Arab military forces) appear to have been quickly made. We believe, nevertheless, that several broad problems remain unsettled: how rapidly and completely to fill Arab requests for military assistance; how best to induce the Arab states to give the USSR a larger voice in Arab political and military decisions; what position to take on differences between the radical and conservative Arab states; and, finally, in general, how to maintain and expand the USSR's political influence in the area without encouraging new and dangerous Arab moves against Israel and increasing the risks of a confrontation with the US.

12. Concerning military assistance, we believe that the Soviets have, at least in general terms, given the Arabs assurances that the losses incurred during the war will be restored. The nature and extent of supplies shipped to date suggest that the Soviets are undertaking a substantial reequipment program. To do less would risk their long-cultivated relationships with the radical Arab leaders. The likelihood that rehabilitation of Arab military strength will take a year or more gives the Soviets a good deal of elbow room.

13. Having regained a considerable measure of influence among the Arabs by means of the emergency resupply effort, the Soviets are likely to defer decisions concerning the ultimate level of arms shipments and the composition of the Arab arsenal. We believe that Moscow will avoid arming the Arabs on a scale and in a manner which would give them such superiority in weapons and equipment over the Israelis as to risk provocative Arab action or Israeli pre-

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emption. The Soviets would almost certainly reject any Arab demands for nuclear weapons. The Arabs, however, acutely conscious of the effectiveness of Israel's preemptive strikes, will press very hard for weapons which would give them greater security in the future. The Soviets, in response to these pressures, may augment Arab bomber strength; it is possible, though less likely, that they will also provide the Arabs with conventional weapons more advanced than those already promised before the hostilities.¹

14. Both the Soviets and the Arabs might consider other means to deter the Israelis from reopening hostilities. The Soviets have sent units of their Mediterranean fleet to Alexandria and Port Said and to Latakia. Soviet naval units may remain in UAR and adjacent waters and use Arab facilities for some time. Moreover, there is likely to be an influx of Soviet advisers, instructors, and technicians into the area. And, though the USSR will continue to be wary of formal base agreements and will almost certainly avoid signing any defense pacts, there is likely to be an increased Soviet military presence in Arab ports and military facilities.

15. The USSR, while energetically reestablishing its close ties with radical Arab leaders, has made gestures of support to some of the moderates, even offering Soviet equipment to Hussein of Jordan. But the closer the relationship between the Soviets and the radical states, the greater will be the suspicions of the conservatives. They will attempt to maintain their status as "good Arabs" by enunciating anti-Western and anti-Israeli policies but will probably avoid close association with the radical Arab states and the USSR.

16. Concern over Arab militancy and inefficiency is likely, we think, to lead the Soviets to try to exercise greater influence over the political leaders and military establishments of the radical Arab states. By infiltrating advisers into the armed forces, the Soviets may hope to gain more control over independent Arab military initiatives. They may also seek to push the radical states into more extreme anti-Western positions and more orthodox socialist configurations. Nasser and the Syrian leaders are probably now more dependent on Soviet support and more susceptible to Soviet influence than before the war. While we do not believe that the radical Arab states wish to become members of the Communist camp, they may accept a closer relationship with the USSR.

¹ The weapons promised before the war include the TU-16 aircraft with air-to-surface missile, a short-range (up to 50 miles) artillery rocket (FROG), a coastal defense cruise missile, and the SAM-equipped modified KOTLIN-class destroyer.

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